



7-13-1881

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Crowded by the Drifted Pack on a Lee Shore-An
Esquimo Baby-Repairing the Damages to the Ship-
The Wreck of the Schooner-Loleta-Plover Bay.
Steamer Corwin, Plover Bay, June 15, 1881.

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Recommended Citation

Muir, John, "Dodging The Ice. The Corwin Hard Pressed-Crowded by the Drifted Pack on a Lee Shore-An Esquimo Baby-Repairing the Damages to the Ship-The Wreck of the Schooner-Loleta-Plover Bay. Steamer Corwin, Plover Bay, June 15, 1881." (1881). *John Muir: A Reading Bibliography by Kimes*. 158.
<https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/jmb/158>

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Written, June 15, 1881
Pub. July 13 " "

DODGING THE ICE.

The Corwin Hard Pressed—Crowded by the Drifted Pack on a Lee Shore—An Esquimo Baby—Repairing the Damages to the Ship—The Wreck of the schooner Loleta—Plover Bay.

STEAMER CORWIN,
PLOVER BAY, June 15, 1881.

fair in the morning

We left our anchorage at St. Laurence Bay at 4 A. M., June 7th, and steered once more for Plover Bay. The norther that had been blowing so long gave place to a light southerly breeze, and a gentle dusting of snow was falling. In the afternoon the sea became smooth and glassy as a mountain lake, and the clouds lifted, gradually unveiling the Siberian coast up to the tops of the mountains. First the black bluffs standing close to the water, came in sight; then the white slopes, and then one summit after another until a continuous range 40 or 50 miles long could be seen from one point of view, forming a very beautiful landscape. Smooth, dull, dark water in the foreground; next, a broad belt of ice mostly white like snow, with numerous masses of blue and black shade among its jagged, uplifted blocks. Then a strip of comparatively low shore, black and gray; and then back of that the pure, white mountains, with only here and there dark spots, where the rock faces are too steep for snow to lie upon. Sharp peaks are seen, fluted by avalanches; glacier wombs, delicate in curve and outline as shells; rounded, overswept brows and domes, and long, withdrawing valleys leading back into the highest Alpine groups, whence flowed noble glaciers in imposing ranks into what is now Behring Sea.

[of June]

We had hoped the gale had broken and driven away the floe that barred our way on the 5th, but while yet 30 miles from the entrance of the bay we were again stopped by an immense field of heavy ice that stretched from the shore southeastward as far as the eye could reach. We pushed slowly into the edge of it a few miles, looking for some opening, but the man in the crow's nest reported it all solid ahead and no water in sight. We thereupon steamed out and steered across to St. Laurence Island to bide our time. Coming to anchor near the northwest end of the island about midnight, having encountered a heavy current putting northward through Behring Strait, caused, no doubt, by the heaping back of the water by the gale of the 5th and 6th.

UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCH FOR THE SCHOONER LOLETA.

We came

Next day, June 8th, we took advantage of the calm weather to go in search of the schooner Loleta that went ashore hereabouts last fall, but for coming on we were unsuccessful, and steamed back to our anchorage in the lee of a high bluff, where we seemed secure from drifting ice.

AN ESQUIMO BABY.

The eighth of June

Several canoe loads of Esquimos came aboard while we lay here, some of the women bringing their little boys and girls and babies, without seeming to heed the weather. One little thing, that the proud mother heid up for our admiration, smiled delightfully, exposing her two precious new teeth. No happier baby could be found in warm parlors, with all that the looms of the world can afford in the way of soft fabrics and with loving attendants to anticipate every want. She looked gaily out at the strange colors about her from her bit of a fur bag, and when she fell asleep her mother laid her upon three oars that were set side by side across the canoe, the snowflakes falling on her face, yet she slept soundly for hours while I watched her, and she never cried. All the youngsters had to get a little bread which both fathers and mothers begged for them, saying, "He little fellow, little fellow." These people interest me greatly, and it is worth coming far to know them, however slightly. The smile or rather broad small grin of that Esquimo baby goes direct to one's heart, and is not likely to be forgotten. When its features had subsided into perfect repose, the laugh gone from its eyes, and the lips closed over its two teeth, I could make its sweet smile bloom out again as often as I nodded and chirruped to it. Heaven bless it.

Some of the boys, too, lads from 8 to 12 years of age, are well behaved, bashful, and usually laugh and turn away their faces when looked at.

HARD PRESSED BY THE ICE PACK.

A little before 4 o'clock on the morning of the 10th, I was awakened by the officer of the deck coming into the cabin and reporting that the weather was densely foggy, and that ice in large masses was crowding down upon us, which meant "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson." Shortly afterward, the first mass

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struck the ship and made her tremble in every joint; then another and another in quick succession, while the anchor was being hurriedly raised. The situation we suddenly found ourselves in was quite serious. The ice, had it been like that about the ship of the Ancient Mariner—"here and there and all around"—would have raised but little apprehension, but it was only on one side of us, while a rocky beach was close by on the other, and against this beach in our disabled condition the ice was steadily driving us. Whether backing or going ahead in so crowded a bit of water the result for some time was only so many shoves toward shore. At length a block of small size, 20 or 30 feet in diameter, drifted in between us and the shore, and by steaming against it and striking it on the landward bow she glinted round head to the pack, and an opening allowing an entrance to be made occurring, she was soon safe in the middle of it, and in an hour or two worked out into open water.

THE WRECK OF THE LOLETA.

After the fog lifted we went again in search of the Loleta, and discovered her five or six miles below the Esquimo village. Dropping anchor at the edge of a sheet of firm shore-ice, we went across it to the wreck to see whether we could not get some pintles from it for our rudder. We found her rudder had been carried away, but procured some useful irons, blocks, tackle, etc.

HINTS OF ARCTIC SPRING.

Back a hundred yards from the beach I found a few hints of the coming spring, though most of the ground is still covered with snow. The dwarf willow is beginning to put out its catkins, and a few buds of saxifrages, erigerons and heathworts are beginning to swell. The bulk of the vegetation is composed of mosses and lichens. Half a mile from the wreck there is a deserted Esquimo village. All its inhabitants are said to have died of famine two winters ago. The traces of both local and general glaciation are particularly clear and telling on this island.

RUDDER REPAIRED AND SHIPPED.

This afternoon being calm we succeeded in mending and shipping the rudder, and next morning set out yet again for Plover Bay, where we now are, having arrived about midnight on the 11th, and completed repairs next day. We have also taken on a considerable quantity of coal, and expect to sail again tomorrow in complete condition in every particular.

HOMEWARD-BOUND WHALER—THE FLEET.

On the 13th the whaler Thomas Pope arrived here and is anchored to the ice near us, getting

everything in trim for sea, having already taken all the oil she can carry. All the fleet are doing well this year, or as the natives express it, they are getting a "big grease."

PLOVER BAY.

Plover Bay takes its name from H. M. S. Plover, which passed the winter of 1848-49 here while on a cruise in search of Franklin. It is a glacial fiord, which in the height of its walls is more Yosemite than any other I have yet seen in Siberia. The walls are from 1,500 to 2,500 feet high, and on some outstanding buttresses the grooved and scratched surface that the ice flowed past is still well preserved, though over the greater portion of both walls the rock is rapidly disintegrating and presents a dreary, forbidding appearance. Not only are there no trees here, but there seems at first sight to be no vegetation of any sort. In a short scramble, however, I discovered some lovely garden spots, with atelma and anemone in full bloom.

JOHN MUIR.

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around ed her to enter a little distance. This was gradually increased by stepping and starting until we were

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